CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 123
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KISS COMIX 6 features Dave Stevens drawing of Betty Page on the cover and asks Who Killed Betty Page? I didn't know anybody did. $10 from J. M. Berengueuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

EL VIBORA 147 is $10 from the same address. Adults only for all underground comix. Send an age statement with first order.

Will Weirdom never cease? I collect comics with weird covers and ideas and this month's classic pairs up **BIG BERD VERSUS ARNOLD SCHWARZENHEIMER**. Violent muppets? Oy! The address is 818 Fort Salonga Road, Suite 118, Northport, New York 11768. Tom Arvis drew it. Write and ask for their catalog.

Eric Vincent illustrated a story called "The Spy," in Dark Horse's **ANIMAL CONFIDENTIAL**. I liked Nina Paley's "I was a teenaged hairball." Dark Horse will bring out a book by Paley this Fall.

BABY SUE rants on in V. 3, issue 3. $2 from POB 1111, Decatur, GA 30031-1111.

BAY CON '92 is set for May 22-25, 1992, at the Red Lion Inn in San Jose, California. Information from POB 10367, San Jose, CA 95157.

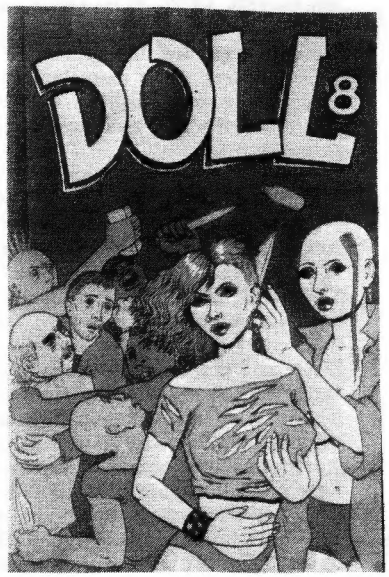
CEREBUS 157 features a nice drawing of a woman in bed with an aardvark. Check it out at your local comic book store.

Mr. Poetry's Poetry Reading Tips is the latest by John Dooley and Michael Stengl. $1 pp. from Michael Stengl, POB 568, Trinidad, CA 95570. It made me laugh, mainly because I was into the poetry trip back in my college teaching days. Yes, it's true. I read poems in local coffee shops, some of them my own compositions. It all had to do with the fact that I wound up in the Bay Area at the tail end of the Beat poetry trip and heard people like Allen Ginsberg reading on street corners out in North Beach.

If you've missed seeing Steve Lafler's **DOGBOY**, ease up. He makes a new appearance in **BUZZARD 5**. $3.50 from Cat-Head Comics, POB 576, Hudson, MA 01749. Coming up from the same company is J. R. Williams' **BUMMER**. Most back issues are still available so ask for a list!

Mike Grell is illustrating a James Bond story, *Permission to Die*, for Eclipse. I mention this because I got a freebie at Wonder Con. and because I have all the Bond videos.

Sorry, but I just don't believe Brooke Shields as **BRENDA STARR**. *Hated it*, as the Men on Film from Living Color would say.



DOLL WARS

DOLL isn't worn out yet. How could she be? A woman with renewable body parts? **#8** will be out from Rip Off Press this summer. I think it would be nice to see a team-up of Doll and Data, the android from **STAR TREK**. That's always been a problem in underground comix. No team-ups. Imagine. Wonder Wart-hog meets Angelfood McSpade. Cherry Poptart meets Harold Hedd. Fat Freddy's Cat and Waldo and Pat the Cat could all get together for a big Yowl-in on Sammy Smoot's windowsill.

Would you believe **MS. PMS?** With a lead story entitled "Death of the Afterbirth"? Yep, all true. It was written and drawn by Chris Swafford of Joplin, MO.

TARZAN, SCHMARZAN, AND MELVIN ...

The family of Edgar Rice Burroughs is bugged at **VOGUE** this month because they have allegedly tarnished the clean, wholesome image of the ape man, Tarzan. Why, **VOGUE** implies via a photo spread that Tarzan and Jane might have done more in the tree house than play with Boy and Cheeta and the protectors of Tarzan's chastity have filed suit in Manhattan Federal Court.

Way back in 1912 when Burroughs first published a story about Tarzan in *All-Story Magazine*, it was closely compared to the story of Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's **JUNGLE BOOK** and yep, Kipling said it was obviously a swipe of his character. But Burroughs' version of the character was successful in pulp, strip, and comic book, which meant numerous imitations like Ka-anga who had the lead story in Fiction House's **JUNGLE COMICS**. And if there were white kings of the African jungle, there had to be queens, right? Wil Eisner thought so and invented Sheena. But the jungle popcult of the thirties was less influenced by Burroughs and the Hogarth Tarzan strip running in the Sunday funnies than by the big game hunting fad which intrigued Ernest Hemingway to go on safari and write the **GREEN HILLS OF AFRICA** [1934]. The needs of travelling circuses and city zoos sent Clyde Beatty and Frank Buck into the jungles and their exploits were widely reported in news stories and movietone newsreels. Beatty and Buck came and went, but Tarzan had a long career in movies and comic strips. His absurd brand of white supremacy was a fantasy panacea [a fantacea?] for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed white men who stood in the bread lines during the Depression that began when the market crashed in October of 1929.

A little strange to see the Burroughs family worried about a **VOGUE** pictorial. Can it be they missed John Derek's version of **TARZAN** with Bo as Jane? Even stranger to look at a Hogarth page from a 1939 Sunday funnies page Clark Dissmeyer sent me and see one lone white man, namely Tarzan, beating up half a dozen black men, referred to as "savages."

I see Wonder Woman is back. Walking around in the snow in her star-spangled underwear. You're safe, guys, because it's being written by a man again. Well, get this, *when you present a woman as a heroine, yet she hasn't got sense enough to dress for the weather, you're automatically saying she's a stupid bimbo.* Superman, Batman, and the rest of the colored underwear crew always dress for the weather. Look at **SILVER SABLE**. Marvel solved the problem with her the way they did with **BLACK WIDOW** back in the seventies. **SABLE** wears a silver colored body suit which is skin tight so she's naked without being naked. Clever, huh? I like the panel where **SABLE** kicks this guy in the balls. "I had **assumed** your brain was in your skull. My mistake," she says. Tsk! Tsk! Wonder Woman would never do a thing like that. DC heroines are couther than Marvel.

Dear Clay,

I hope you don't take offense at this, but it seems to me that in the past year your **COMIX WAVE** articles are taking an increasingly negative or defeatist view of the world. There are lots of things to rail about, but there are also lots of things to be enthusiastic about. I think I picked up on **COMIX WORLD** around the 30th issue or so. It excited me because you were writing about creative people trying to do something with their skills and energy. It made me feel there was a community of people who might succeed in making this world a more fun and fair place.

Do you think there has been a shift in your writings? It is possible that I am just injecting something that really stems from me. What artists and people are doing positive things that you'd like to see more people aware of? I'm interested.

-Jay Kennedy

Dear Jay,

I think this is a valid reaction, perhaps more to what is going on in 1992 than to my **CW** ravings. In the early seventies, **CW** reflected what was going on at that time, i. e., a viable underground network of cartoonists in synch with an overall movement I felt was positive in nature. The Movement has continued in varied forms with younger people moving in and pushing the older generation out. Ron Cobb, who did a number of superb political cartoons for the Los Angeles **FREE PRESS**, is now animating aliens and monsters for the movie industry. Robert Crumb, whose "Whiteman" was a socio-psychological breakthrough in the late sixties, is now hanging around in Paris and being the "living legend" at European comic art shows. While the sexual content of the early underground comix was liberating to a generation coming out of the repressive era of McCarthy and his fascist Unamerican Activities Committee and the Wertham-stimulated Comics Code Authority of 1954, the sexual content of many current titles by Eros, Last Gasp, and Rip Off Press is pure entertainment and titillation sans social or political meaning.

In my newsletter I reacted to and commented upon what was happening at the time. I will never deny that I get nostalgic for the euphoric sixties when all the doors were open and something or someone new came in every day. The nineties are a whole different world. When I walk through the comic store, what do I see along the shelves? Terminators, Aliens, Punishers, murderous clowns, serial killers, war, plague, pestilence, anger, and very, very little that I consider positive. The art in many of these comic books is very good, but I find the spirit in which the repetitive stories are produced to be mean and warped. Some of the pages may be aesthetically commanding, but I find the entire genre an intellectual vacuum and the aura projected decisively negative. How could this not be reflected in my current articles? I might mention Terry Laban's **UNSUPERVISED EXISTENCE** series here. I found all of these stores filled with humor and insight and I felt the author had a positive humanitarian point of view, one which I share. I enjoy Laban's political panels in **IN THESE TIMES** and I think he and M. K. Wuerker, whose panels appear often in **Z** are centered in the way Ron Cobb was circa 1967.

I have always admired the work of Guy Colwell, a major underground cartoonist, seldom mentioned outside my own newsletter. His **INNER CITY ROMANCE** series in the early seventies showed a lot of insight into the social and political thought of the time. His **DOLL** trilogy was a marvelous journey into male-female relationships, but I felt that continuing the title was pornography for its own sake.

I would consider the work of both Laban and Colwell negative and defeatist. A lot of depressing stuff there. I think a positive social commentary can always be interpreted as negative and defeatist. I might cite T. S. Eliot's THE WASTE LAND, James Joyce's ULYSSES, Shakespeare's HAMLET, usw.

Art is so complex. In 1973, it was still idealism. I don't remember any underground cartoonist ever saying he was in it for the money, but I remember all the stuff I never printed and most of it was about money. Admiration was expressed about those who were actually making a living with comic art. My early newsletters are mostly hype with very little insight or philosophy. Since those days, I have interviewed nearly every innovator in comics and animation and read hundreds of books about the artists and the industry. I look at the comic books a lot more critically today than I did then and I am more prone to express my true feelings now than I was when I was trying to maintain friendly relationships with all of the people in the business. It was not simple. I was an underground press reporter who worked by the seat of his pants. I would interview a cartoonist one day and he would tell me his publisher was every kind of an asshole and a rip-off. The next day I would be talking to the publisher and he would be complaining about this or that artist being too drunk or stoned to get his art in so the book was being held up. I would talk to one artist and he would say he was never going to ask this or that artist for a story again because the asshole was holding up the book. I would hear all about the personal lives of the artists and publishers, what drugs they were using, who was fucking who, who was a thief and couldn't be trusted, blah! blah! blah! *I never printed any of that stuff in my newsletter, but I was called a gossip anyway.*

Most of the people I knew and wrote about are dead, Jay. The others have moved away and aged just like you and me. The Newave network I inspired through CW in early eighties was very successful as you know. Out of it came Kevin Eastman, Valentino, John Howard, Bob Vojtko who is now a successful magazine and tabloid panel cartoonist. The product of that period was never an economic success, though it might have been had I been willing to move in the direction taken by Fantagraphics. I didn't. I am still a hobbyist, not a businessman. A number of the comic books around today were offered to me first, but I always routed them to one or another of the underground companies.

I guess I don't know what you would consider positive, Jay. Underground comix were positive in the sense that they broke the stranglehold of an Eastern monopoly and ultimately returned control of the form to the creator. But the content was seldom positive. Crumb's sadistic misogyny was humorous and cathartic on first reading, but upon reflection who can fail to feel a bit of sympathy for a man in his late forties who continues to draw pictures of a vicious little man torturing oversized pubescent girls? The revolutionary *smash the state* rhetoric of the time merely seems naive in the shadow of the Reagan-Bush oligarchy.

I will say this--I am more pleased with newsletter these days than I have been in a long while, because I feel it is a closer reflection of what is really going on around me than it was. I was in danger of becoming nothing but a hype sheet for awhile and that bothered me. As for the tone and the attitude, well, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. There are a lot of nice things going on in comics. I like them. Nice to see the reprints of L'il Abner and the Messmer Felix the Cat. But I'm not stimulated to write about the comics that are going well.

I got a lot of positive feedback about that acid article in my last issue. I don't have anything against acid per se, but I do know that for every intellectual who takes it in order to raise his consciousness, there are a hundred brainless clods who take it for the high and expect the rest of us to clean up after and take care of them. 'Twas ever thus in Haight-Ashbury and lsd's effect upon the uninformed brain is no different in 1992.

-Clay

DAVE MERAZ [1966-1992]

SICK TALES artist Dave Meraz drowned in Santa Cruz on March 10. Rip Off Press has cancelled his comic book. Born July 17, 1966, Dave was 25.

BENNY HILL [1925-1992]

Benny Hill died in London in April of a heart attack at 67. Benny was born January 21, 1925. His parents were circus performers. His show was popular in England until it went off the air in 1989. It is still showing in re-runs on the Fox Network in the U.S. His routines are available on video. I loved Benny and his gang.